

The Lie-Detector Era

II. 'It's a Lot Easier, and It Don't Leave Marks'

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THE LIE DETECTOR is here to stay. It is slowly but surely worming its way into the cancerous and parasitical habits of deception which have been gnawing insidiously at the vitals of human society for untold centuries. Thus one of the pioneers in lie detection, the late Dr. William Moulton Marston, in his authoritative book, *The Lie Detector Test* (Richard R. Smith, 1938).

"Lifting our gaze to farther horizons," Dr. Marston went on, "three possibilities for world-wide application of the deception test appear. . . . The possibilities were (1) in politics ("Suppose every candidate for public office had to take a Lie Detector examination on his past record . . ."); (2) "in marital and domestic affairs" (to find out what people really think of each other); (3) "to supply a motive for moral education . . . It is one thing for a youngster to feel vague, uneasy stirrings of conscience when he lies or cheats or steals. It is quite another thing for him to know that he will be caught whenever he is compelled to take a Lie Detector test."

Alas for such Utopian visions! Far from advancing to broader triumphs, the profession of late years has been on the defensive, if not in a state of crisis.

Although the polygraph, the most commonly used type of lie detector, has been refined and improved since 1918 by a series of reputable criminologists, beginning with Dr. Marston himself, its scientific standing is still doubtful. Our courts, for example, do not yet admit its findings as evidence. The doubts proceed from two incontrovertible facts: (1) The worth of a polygraph test depends about ten per cent on the machine and about ninety per cent on the training, skill, experience, and responsibility of the examiner who uses the machine; (2) according to members of the profession themselves, only about one-tenth of the

four hundred or so examiners now giving lie-detection tests are adequately qualified. The human element, in short, is at once all-important and deficient.

THE MOST ACUTE current problem in polygraphy, therefore, is how to set and maintain professional standards. It was chiefly this problem that led to the founding in 1947 of the International Society for the Detection of Deception, with the motto "Truth Through Science." The organization's name has recently been changed to the Academy for Scientific Interrogation.

The Academy now has about 150 members and puts out a fascinating *Bulletin*, which includes full reports on meetings (except the one in Louisville last year—somebody stole the tape recorder) as well as miscellaneous news items, such as the one about the use of the polygraph to clear the manager of the Buffalo Bisons of the charge of spitting in an umpire's face. The *Bulletin* also divulges tricks of the trade such as this one reported by Sheriff "Buckshot" Lane of Wharton County, Texas, who ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1952: "In my detector room, I have nothing but chairs, the desk and the machine, and always, in a very prominent spot, the Bible. I found the Bible works well beside the machine. . . . I use the Bible as a last resort just prior to hooking up the subject for the examination. I am lazy and sure hate to work when I can do it the easy way."

The Polygraph In Government

What was a few years ago the greatest triumph of the lie detector—its increasing use by government agencies to check up on their employees—has now become the profession's big-

gest headache. The extensive polygraph program at the Oak Ridge atomic-bomb plant was discontinued last year as being ineffective in detecting security risks, and the methods of the examiners in other government departments have caused a great deal of resentment and even scandal.

President LeMoyne Snyder warned the 1953 convention of the Academy of Scientific Interrogation: "It takes just a few fascos, a few more Congressmen sounding off . . . to just knock the whole thing on the head. We have to do everything that is humanly possible to see that this doesn't happen . . . that persons who practice this profession are of such standard and such caliber, morally as well as scientifically, that the good name of the lie detector is protected."

WHILE THERE is no doubt that the instrument has achieved some remarkable success in criminal work, there is considerable doubt whether it can be used effectively—or decently—in inquiring into the political and personal habits of the great numbers of citizens who happen to work, or happen to want to work, for their government. For several years now, disturbing stories have been floating around Washington about the sufferings and injustice caused by lie-detection tests.

Professor Fred E. Inbau, a widely respected authority, co-author with John E. Reid of *Lie Detection and Criminal Interrogation*, has sharply criticized the government's use of "unqualified and improperly trained" examiners: "For the future welfare of this nation, let us hope that somewhere along the line of persons responsible for the security of our secret weapons . . . there develops a realization that the dependability of lie detection test results is no greater than the qualifications and the ability of the examiner himself." These words were written in March, 1950. Except for the angry speech by Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon in January, 1952, no high official in Washington has, from what the record shows, developed such a realization.

Now that the Oak Ridge program has been abandoned, the lie detector is used for general security screening in only three government agencies, as far as I know, the official

make screen on this delicate subject can be penetrated. All three are extraordinarily hush-hush defense agencies: the Operations Research Office (oro), the Central Intelligence Agency (cia), and the National Security Agency (nsa). The Army set up oro, as a civilian adjunct of its G-3 division, in the fall of 1948 under contract with Johns Hopkins University. Oro's staff of some three hundred apply scientific methods to the solution of problems of combat warfare. As the organization expanded from the original small group most of whom knew each other, they themselves, according to Dr. L. H. Rumbaugh, a physicist who is its deputy director, decided to introduce the polygraph as an added security check. So in 1950, Russell Chatham, who was then also chief of the Atomic Energy Commission's Oak Ridge polygraph operation, began testing oro personnel; he still spends several days a week examining new oro employees and also "running" everybody else in the organization on the machine twice a year.

In 1948, the cia, which as the name suggests engages in espionage, both straight and counter, decided to set up its own lie-detection program. "While no worker is compelled to submit to the device's estimate of his veracity," reported the *Army Times* of December 31, 1949, "ninety-nine per cent of the agency's employees have undergone the test voluntarily, including Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, head of the cia." Allen Dulles, present head of the agency, recently told *U.S. News & World Report* that "on the whole" cia had found the polygraph "helpful," adding, "you should remember that we never use lie-detector results as conclusive. It merely gives clues to be followed up in other ways, particularly the ordinary methods of questioning . . . it has saved us a good many headaches, and has also helped establish the innocence of some people who were falsely accused."

The NSA Chamber of Horrors

The methods used in the oro and cia lie-detection programs, so far as can be established, have evoked little objection from the "subjects." (Some, of course, may have objected to the whole idea of such tests.) The case

is far otherwise with the National Security Agency, whose polygraphists have in a relatively short time aroused more distrust and hatred of their trade than all their colleagues put together.

The nsa, known until recently as the Armed Forces Security Agency, is a highly secretive outfit—"the most silent of the intelligence agencies." It is believed to have somewhere between four and eight thou-



sand employees, engaged, it has been said, in breaking foreign codes. (Although nsa carries secretiveness so far that it warns its employees not even to speak its awesome name outside the premises, the exact locations of the latter—4000 Arlington Hall, 3801 Nebraska Avenue, and 1436 "U" Street, N.W.—as well as the names of all its key employees may be found quite easily in the Pentagon's telephone directory.)

The nsa lie-detection program was begun early in 1951 by hiring, at salaries of \$6,400 a year, six examiners, none of whom, it is said, had more training than a six weeks' course at the Keeler school in Chicago, which had fallen into disrepute after the death of its founder in 1949. These alleged examiners proceeded to test every nsa employee, and they or their successors have tested every new employee taken on since then. Their methods have been, to put it mildly, appalling.

"If they think they are getting information, they are mistaken," a former employee has observed. "Maybe they're testing for emotional stability." Another theory is that the tests are a kind of hazing, designed not to find out anything about security risks but to intimidate the newcomers and break them to harness. A third theory—since the tests make no sense in terms of their ostensible purpose, such theories are

necessary—is that the tests are really nothing but fishing expeditions, especially during the "discussion period" before the machine is started, to see what dirt can be turned up on the subjects and their friends.

Two case histories may give an idea of what has been going on at nsa. The names are fictitious because, although neither Jane Doe nor Richard Roe is still in government service, both were warned, like all who took the nsa tests, never to mention the fact that they had done so. One was even threatened with the Espionage Act—on the absurd ground that the very act of undergoing the test was "classified" information.

Jane Doe, daughter of a Pennsylvania Republican, got a job with nsa in the spring of 1952 after her graduation from a Midwestern women's college. That fall, while she was still waiting for her security clearance, she and some twenty other "unclear persons" were called to a meeting at which an Army captain asked them to agree to take lie-detector tests in order to speed up their clearances. It was entirely voluntary, he explained, adding, however, that he really couldn't say when or if those who refused to take the tests would get their clearances. The group "volunteered" unanimously to take the tests.

A few days later, Miss Doe was shown into a small bare-walled room and seated in front of a desk behind which were a polygraph and a beefy individual whom she classified as an ex-cop from his aggressive manner and his recursive grammar.

His opening remarks were to the point: "If you're lying, we're going to find you out." ("The examiner by his friendly attitude undertakes to reassure the suspect and put him at his ease," writes Clarence D. Lee in *The Instrumental Detection of Deception*. But of course Captain Lee was describing the examination of criminals, not of college girls.) The examiner handed Miss Doe a mimeographed list of questions which included some "neutral" ones like "Is your name Jane Doe?" and "Did you eat breakfast today?" mixed in with some "crucial" ones like "Have you ever associated with Communists?" "Are you an alco-

holic?" "Are you a dope addict?" "Are you a homosexual?" and "Are you in any way subject to blackmail?" He explained that she must answer Yes or No to each question.

At this point Miss Doe began to get a little annoyed. After a "dry run" through the questions and an inconclusive fencing match as to how to tell who is a Communist and who isn't, the examiner wrapped the blood-pressure gadget around her arm, hooked the pneumograph around her chest, and attached the galvanic electrode to her hand. The machine was started, the pens began to trace their lines on the graph paper, and the examiner began to ask the questions again. The whole test took about ten minutes, she thinks, or rather would have if she had not had a bad case of hay fever that day, so that every time she sneezed a cataclysm appeared on the graph and the process had to be begun all over again. By the time the test was over, she felt that she had won the slight consolation of having irritated the examiner almost as much as he had irritated her. "Looking back on it," Miss Doe has said, "it's not the results of the test I object to—I must have passed with flying colors, since I got top-secret clearance—but the humiliation of being treated as a suspected liar and criminal."

The Ordeal of Richard Roe

Richard Roe took his test in the fall of 1951. Like Miss Doe, he had been working for several months at NSA but had not yet been cleared. Also like her, he is a college graduate—a political science major—and was interrogated by an examiner who may or may not have gone to high school. (The work at NSA demands people of high intellectual qualifications, a fact hopelessly in collision with the personnel chief's yearnings for innocents unexposed to "radical" ideas; the polygraph staff meets that officer's standards, but this very fact makes it difficult for them to communicate with the people they are supposed to test.) "I was willing, even eager, to take the test because I believed in its scientific reliability," says Richard Roe. "But halfway through, I felt like someone being tried in a Moscow purge."

The third-degree atmosphere was

established the minute he entered the room. "My examiner looked and acted like a desk sergeant. He fixed me with a suspicious stare, didn't shake hands, smile, or even introduce himself." ("An examiner . . . must be an intelligent person

THE SUPER-WEAPON

A COUPLE of years ago, the United Press sent out a story concerning one Roy Post, identified only as "a New York criminologist and investor," who had proposed a "dash column" armed with lie detectors to eliminate subjects and completely all Communists from columns. "Volunteering to serve without pay, Mr. Post said he would train 10 or 12 lie-detectors, equip them with lie detectors, and send them into strategic industries which might be subject to sabotage. 'With a battalion of that kind,' Mr. Post said, 'we could examine about 2,000 persons a day, about one every three minutes.'" Although expert opinion holds that no meaningful test can be conducted in less than about forty-five minutes, Mr. Post suggested that the subjects be required to answer Yes or No to just three questions:

"Did you eat breakfast today?"

"Do you drive a car?"

"Are you in the employ of any foreign government?"

Despite Mr. Post's impressive confidence in his proposal—"We'd have the rats running to their holes the minute we started"—it seems to have been stillborn. Perhaps it was too complicated. Let us refer to page 188 of Lee's *Instrumental Detection of Deception* for an outline of "a questioning technique which is both simple and brief." It may be just what we need in this country today. The subject is to be asked only two questions:

"Are you innocent?"

"Are you guilty?"

Remember! We want a simple answer of Yes or No!

with a reasonably good educational background, preferably college training. He should have . . . general ability to 'get along' with people and to be well liked. . . ."—*Lie Detection and Criminal Interrogation*, by Inbau and Reid.)

One of the questions on the list the examiner presented to Mr. Roe was, "Have you ever been sympathetic to Communism?" It caused

a good deal of grief to both of them. Mr. Roe explained, or rather tried to—"there was a total lack of empathy"—that he had studied Marx in college and consequently found it difficult to answer this with a simple Yes or No. If by "Communism" the examiner meant Marx's doctrines, then he could only say he was sympathetic to some and unsympathetic to others. If the term was to be taken in its Russian context, then he felt obliged to say that he had once felt sympathetic to the Mensheviks but had never been sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. All of this passed over the inquisitor's head with a heavy, soughing sound like wind in the branches of a rain-soaked tree. "I got the impression that he considered anyone who had studied Marx to be *ipso facto* a security risk and also that he personally wanted me to fail."

The results were inconclusive, and Mr. Roe, a rather high-strung type, had to take the test three more times, each time with ambiguous results. After each test, his security officer tried to persuade him to resign quietly, thus avoiding the possible stigma of being fired. The security officer also seemed anxious to save the security division a lot of trouble and possibly to add a scalp to be displayed in inquiring McCarthys later on. Mr. Roe was finally dropped, much to everyone's relief, including his own.

Peeping Tom And His Polygraph

Other veterans of the polygraph wars at NSA tell stories similar to Miss Doe's and Mr. Roe's. The examiners seem to have violated just about every rule of proper polygraph technique. The questions were often extremely vague—"Have you ever done anything you were ashamed of?" "Are you now or have you ever been in sympathy with leftist ideas?" ("The preparation of test questions is an extremely important aspect of the examination. The questions must be unambiguous, unequivocal and thoroughly understandable to the subject."—Inbau and Reid, *op. cit.*)

When a psychology major in college who is working on his doctor-

in history got the one about "leftist ideas." He asked Koh a question reformulated. "But the examiner refused—he couldn't see why if I was 'innocent' I found it hard to answer. We just weren't en rapport at all." Another NSA subject—or victim—has reported that at one point his examiner shouted at him, "Goddamn it, you're lying! I know you're lying, the machine tells me so!" ("The cross-examiner must remember at all times that he is not seeking to browbeat, trip or confuse his witness. He is a cross-examining attorney in court. . . . Such conflict reactions only make the blood pressure reader harder to read."—William Montford Marston, *op. cit.*)

Look Out for the EPQ!

Although all the manuals urge the examiner to try to reduce rather than increase emotional tension, so that significant reactions are not masked by irrelevant ones, the NSA gang relied heavily on what is known unfavorably in the trade as the EPQ (Embarrassing Personal Question) technique. EPQs are generally directed to the more intimate aspects of the subject's sex life. Women are apt to resent being asked, by a strange man, questions like (to unmarried girls) "Have you ever slept with a man?"—at least one is reported to have walked out at this point—and (to married women) "Did you sleep with your husband before you were married?" Reaction to EPQs, Inbau and Reid have written, "is not significant for any practical useful purpose. Moreover, it can be misleading. . . . The factors of surprise, anticipation, embarrassment, etc., which constitute the stimulating effect of a 'personal embarrassing' question, are totally different and unrelated to those involved about a question about the offense (e.g. burglary) under investigation. For control purposes the examiner might just as well set off a firecracker!"

The folklore of NSA is full of stories about these tests: the office belle, an innocent young thing who was asked if she liked girls and got into trouble when she said of course she did; the married woman who got one examiner fired because after he had asked her "Have you ever cheated on your husband?" he told her

she was lying when she said No. . . . a date; and the leering assumption on the part of the examiners that anyone who had spent much time abroad, especially in Paris, was a Don Juan, a pervert, or both.

These stories may well be apocryphal; the point is that they are told—and believed—throughout the agency. Horror tales about the polygraph department at 1436 "U" Street (a heavily guarded building between a gas station and an undertaker's parlor) are a staple of conversation. There are rumors every now and then that all employees are going to be retested annually, but although this was done at Oak Ridge and is done at CIA and GPO, it has never been tried at NSA. It is generally felt that an attempt to rerun the old employees would be likely to provoke a mass exodus. Most of the employees resent bitterly the fact that they were bamboozled into taking a test, represented as a routine scientific process, that turned out to be a third degree.

RESENTMENT over the tests had become so articulate within a few months of their inception—probably nothing has caused so much loose talk among NSA personnel as the tests that were supposed to tighten up security there—that in the fall of 1951 three leading professionals (Russell Chatham, John Reid, and



George Hancy) met in Chicago to discuss the problem. "It was decided that Mr. Chatham would go to Washington and express their displeasure and concern at the manner in which these tests were being handled," one of them has since written. "It was our information that the

men conducting some of these examinations had little or no experience . . . also that the polygraph tests were being used conclusively in determining whether or not an applicant would be employed. Mr. Chatham called on interested officers and pointed out those things which were left to be a reflection on the polygraph field. . . . It was his feeling when he left that the situation would be corrected or stopped. Evidently such was not the case, as the practice was continued and perhaps many people have been unnecessarily harmed as a result."

The foregoing was written early in 1952. Whether or to what extent NSA has mended its polygraph manners since then is a murky matter in most other aspects of the Most Sensitive Agency. Some reports say that the EPQ flourishes there as always. Others, including Mr. Chatham, believe the situation has at last been cleaned up. NSA itself, answering questions put to it on behalf of this magazine by a Defense Department security officer, who says he himself has never been able to get any further inside NSA than the reception room, states that its examiners are now "required . . . to conduct themselves in an objective and professional manner," that they are given the tests themselves by independent firms before being hired and are periodically retested (embittered NSA engineers claim this is a desperate attempt to reduce the incidence of blackmailing and Peeping Tom questioning), and concludes, "Changes have been made in personnel, method and machinery, based on latest developments in the field"—a reassuring but somewhat vague reply.

The Soul-Washer

But even the excesses of the government's use of the lie detector in mass security screening cannot compare with the suffering and injustice that use of the device has caused in individual cases. Initiated as part of the Truman Administration's offensive reaction to Republican critics, the practice has increased greatly in the Eisenhower Administration. According to the March '15 number of the *Issue*, a newsletter published by the National Issues Committee:

"Security officers in the executive departments have been informed of their drive to substantiate and improve on White House claims that more than 2,000 security risks have been found and cleaned out of government. In the process, increasing reliance is being placed upon sex blackmail and use of the lie detector as a means of frightening employees into resigning. To increasing numbers of government workers, the lie detector is known as the 'Soul Washer.' The State and Navy Departments are definitely known to be making use of the polygraph in this way. The Alop brothers recently reported that the Commerce Department has also used it in security work, but the charge has been rigorously denied.

For a close-up of this aspect of the problem, let us look at the State Department, in whose harassment and demoralization the lie detector has played a considerable part.

Two years goes back to March, 1950, when Senator McCarthy first began to charge that the State Department was full of homosexuals. By April some Republicans were demanding that the Tydings Committee include the subject of homosexuals in State in its investigation; by May several Senators were effectively quizzing Lieutenant Roy E. Blick, chief of the Washington vice squad, to the effect that 3,500 perverts, no more and no less, held government jobs and that some three to four hundred of them were in the State Department.

By the summer or fall of 1950, the State Department was using the lie detector in "Miscellaneous Morals" cases, most of them involving charges of homosexuality. The Department insists that very few tests have been given—a mere fifty-six since 1950—and these only when the subjects requested them. The figure seems much too low, and the statement that they were all given by request is simply not true. A number of cases are known in which it was the Department, not the subject, that proposed the test—with the distinct implication that refusal would be considered evidence of guilt.

It is highly doubtful, moreover, whether the polygraph can detect homosexual tendencies. On this

point security officers tend to the pessimistic view, professional polygraphists to the optimistic on the ground that questions about sex set up such violent reactions in almost everybody in this land of the Pilgrims' pride as to obscure the specific true-or-false reactions. Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, also, has stated: "I personally would not want to accept solely what the operator of a lie detector



says the instrument shows in proving that a man was or was not a sex deviate." In the cases of at least two State Department officials the charge was false and was shown to be so by the lie detector itself—but that did not make the experience any less humiliating.

"I've Never Been So Sickened"

Just what this use of the polygraph means in human and moral terms is suggested by the experience of a \$12,000-a-year State Department employee who took a "Miscellaneous Morals" test some time ago. By then, McCarthy's campaign against the Department had reached a crescendo. Its security officers were working overtime investigating a spate of individual demonstrations, most of them sent in by a so-called "loyal American underground" inside the Department which was in fact a McCarthy fifth column.

Our man, whose name is not Glenn Tweed, is a solid citizen—happily married, two children, a suburbanite, voted for Eisenhower. One morning, he was summoned to an interview with a security officer who told him that derogatory information had been received about him. Mr. Tweed said he would be

willing to answer any questions. "I was asked how I had been brought into Government service, who had recommended me, and so forth. I replied I had not sought the job but had been asked to join, and I gave the names of my sponsors, who happened to be former gratinmates. Then suddenly there was a change of pace and of tone. The man across the table asked me about my sexual development. When and where did I first feel a need for sexual activity? When did I start masturbating? Was I ever separated from my wife for a long period of time? (Yes—during the war). Were there any disputes as a result? (No). Was readjustment difficult? (No). Was I now leading a normal sex life? (Yes). My answers must have been rather flippant, and I must confess I had no idea what it was all leading up to. I thought this was another of those psychological tests so dear to our managerial experts.

"Did I know any homosexuals? (Yes). Well, give their names. It was then I suddenly realized what the questioning was all about. It also occurred to me it would be fantastic to some people I knew only casually, who were not government employees, and whom I classified as homosexuals only because such was their reputation. So I declined. More questions. Who was the last woman I had intercourse with? (Couldn't recall her name). Was it a pickup? (Yes). Was I disillusioned? (No). Again I took it on something of a joke. 'Listen, my friend,' said my interrogator, leaning forward, 'this is serious. We have information indicating you are a homosexual.' I was flabbergasted and said I would answer more seriously. More questions. Had I ever been arrested? (No). Had I at any time made a gesture toward any of my colleagues that could be interpreted as a pass? (No, but how could I be sure?). Did I know any of these people? He gave me a list of well-known persons publicly identified as homosexuals. Finally, I was asked to sign a sworn statement I was not a homosexual and reminded I would be arrested for perjury if it was false. I dictated it at once.

"I was then told my statement would be strengthened if I took a lie-detector test. I said this seemed uncalled-for and humiliating. Of course

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you don't have to take it," he said. "but it would help." I gathered that if I didn't take the test, the charge would remain in the files regardless of what action was taken. I agreed to take it.

A few days later, I was taken to an interrogation room and introduced to the polygraph examiner, a very young and pleasant psychologist who showed me the machine. He also showed me the questions he was going to ask me—the key ones were more casual queries, very childish—and asked if I was ready and relaxed. I said I was ready and mad. "Don't be mad, because if you react too strongly, it will obscure the test and I'll have to start all over again." The first time around after I was hooked to the machine, I was still angry and shook my head violently in replying negatively to some questions. We had to start all over again, twice. The examiner became a little less pleasant. It occurred to me it was all useless and absurd. I answered the questions more calmly, getting sleepier by the minute. The questions seemed to be arranged so as to build up tension, but it didn't build up—Lynam's even curious, let alone worried, as to what the next one would be.

"The biggest build-up came at the end: Now then, here is the \$64 question. . . . Are you ready? . . . Sure? . . . Your whole future may depend on this one. . . . Here it is. . . . Have you ever . . . been drunk?" "Yes." When the test was over—it seemed like an hour at least, but I lost track of time—the examiner said take it easy and left with a bunch of graphs. Ten minutes later, he came back with the security officer, who said, "Well, it looks O.K. Can't give you a final answer, but it seems fine. You'll hear from me." I never did.

"As I thought, it all over later, I felt more and more angry and humiliated. In urging me to take the test, the security officer had implied it would make his own task easier, would give him—as well as me—protection in case the matter were raised again. So I'd done it for the good of the service. But now I wish I hadn't. I felt rotten about it. The next day my boss greeted me as if I had won the Olympic games. 'I just had a call from the security

chief. He wants me to congratulate you. The charges against you have been destroyed and a commendation has been put into your file!'

"I've never been so sickened. Congratulations for what? I never heard a word about the business again. Months later, after some investigating of my own, I concluded that the accusation had probably been lodged by a subordinate, a rather pathetic alcoholic, who had a grudge against me about a matter of discipline—but I had lost my respect both for the Department and for myself. I believe that when you go through the motions of the lie test you lose your usefulness as a public servant because you have submitted to something so general as to tolerate: You have let a machine verify your word or honesty. Whether you are found guilty or not, your career in government is over—mine was anyway—on the day you sit down and hold hands with the gadget."

"It Was a Living Hell"

The most significant thing about Mr. Tweed's experience is that although he was triumphantly vindicated by the polygraph, he was so disgusted by it all that he got out of government service. How many other able and decent Americans have similarly been driven out of the State Department is not known. What is known is the subversive influence of the



machine on the functioning of the Department. The wrecking process in the Department and the climate of terror it has engendered has gone so far that early this year five of its former high officers were moved to issue a statement of warning that concluded: "Fear is play-

ing an important part in American life at the present time. As a result, the self-confidence, the confidence in others, the sense of fair play and the instinct to protect the rights of the non-conformist are in abeyance. But it would be tragic if this fear, expressing itself in an exaggerated emphasis on security, should lead us to cripple the Foreign Service, our last hope of national defense."

The signers were Norman Armour, Robert Wood Bliss, Joseph C. Gray, William Phillips and C. Howland Shaw, who have in common not only long and honorable State Department careers but also ably conservative political views.

A few weeks later, William H. Huxley, a veteran security officer in the Department, resigned, stating he could no longer endure the reign of terror instituted by Scott McLeod, whom McCarthy had backed for the job as Security Chief. "Everyone worked in an atmosphere of fright," said Mr. Huxley. "It was a living hell for anybody who dared question McLeod's wisdom."

THE use of the lie detector has played an important part in the creation of this "living hell." There was, for instance, the recent case of a Foreign Service officer of very high rank who, having won the esteem of Senator McCarthy and his friends, was questioned over and over by McLeod's security men about his sex life. They asked everything—the lie detector even helped. Surely you're not telling us everything. Surely in your whole life something must have happened. If you'd just tell us about this and so on, it would be much easier on you. The "subject" racked his brain and finally obliged his interrogators by dredging up an episode of his boyhood. Once they had it, they asked if he wanted to resign quietly or face an open hearing. He resigned. Still another senior Foreign Service officer, who was on McCarthy's list, was charged with homosexuality, subjected to the polygraph and finally resigned even though by that time there was no longer any doubt that the charge was false.

Although the detector men are not yet "universal" in the State Department, the Abuse wrote on February 21 last, "They are becoming a

more and more generally accepted practice."

Chaos In Washington

When Anthony Leviero of the New York Times was preparing his pioneer survey of the government use of lie detectors back in December, 1951, he discovered that Robert Ramspeck, then chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, was not even aware that lie detectors were being used anywhere in government service. Neither Chairman Ramspeck nor his successor, Philip Young, once apprised of the facts, has announced any regulations about the use of the polygraph, although the Commission is supposed to set conditions of employment for the more than two million Federal workers. This is typical of the chaos, confusion, indifference, and ignorance that has prevailed in Washington on the subject.

Why, for example, do CIA and NSA screen all new employees on the polygraph, while a half dozen other agencies that also handle highly classified material—notably the National Security Council, whose small staff is privy to more top-secret data than any other group in Washington—make no use of it for that purpose? Why does the Navy use it in security cases, but not, at least according to their spokesmen, the Army or Air Force, who say they use it only in criminal investigations? Why do the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency use the device but not the Foreign Operations Administration?

There is no agreement even among Federal law-enforcement agencies on the use of the lie detector in criminal cases. Post Office inspectors and the Treasury's Secret Service have their own machines and make frequent use of them, while the Internal Revenue Department and the Bureau of Narcotics don't. And the most hallowed of all law-enforcement agencies, the FBI, has consistently taken a dim view of the gadget. Although no agency is a more tempting object of Communist infiltration than the FBI, it does not screen its employees on the polygraph, nor does it employ

the device in its security investigations. "I would never accept the conclusion of a lie detector as proof of innocence or guilt," J. Edgar Hoover told a Senate committee in 1953. "All that it can be called is a psychological aid. . . . I do not have confidence in it as specifically proving anything."

Early in 1952, Congressman Edmund P. Radwan, a Republican



from Buffalo, New York, introduced a bill in the House setting up a committee to investigate the use of the lie detector in government service; to find out if it was effective in security screening, and, if so, to establish rules for its use and for the protection of employees who took the test. Nothing further has been heard of this bill, nor has Senator Morse followed up on his promise to investigate further and introduce corrective legislation if necessary.

How to Beat the Machine

The chief reason the Atomic Energy Commission gave for terminating the big Oak Ridge program after seven years was that the tests had simply not turned out to be effective in security screening. It is not hard to see why. An enemy agent sent into a war plant or a sensitive government agency where polygraphic screening took place would most certainly be trained in ways to beat the machine. And there are ways.

Pain is a kind of emotion and hence registers on the graph; a tack inside the shoe on which the subject pressed from time to time would produce a sensational record. Simply thinking of something else can be misleading. There was the case

of Jerry Thompson, who confessed to and was executed for the murder of Mildred Hallmark, but who had been able to pass a lie-detector test by keeping his thoughts whenever he was asked "Did you kill Mildred?" on another Mildred he had known. Aspirin or drugs will change the heart action, breathing can be controlled, and flexing the muscles will affect blood pressure. Inbau and Reid devote five pages to the last point alone, concluding: "An untrained [our emphasis] subject can consciously or unconsciously influence his blood pressure reactions to such a degree as to . . . confuse the examiner."

Even when the subject is not trying to beat the machine, a wide variety of conditions can interfere with accurate results. Thus a draft of a set of instructions on polygraph work soon to be issued by the Provost Marshal General's office warns against its use on those with permanent heart or lung ailments, or of highly nervous or excitable dispositions, or those addicted to drugs. Such temporary conditions, the draft points out, as drunkenness, colds, coughing spells, asthma, hiccups, hay fever, and other allergies render a subject unfit for testing. "Do not," say the instructions, "fail to consult the examiner when you are in doubt about a person's fitness to take the test. If there is still a doubt, the examiner should consult a medical officer or a psychiatrist." Significantly, the Army document also rules out polygraph tests for homosexuality in the absence of an alleged overt act.

Also significantly, the document suggests that the test should be witnessed by observers outside the room by means of a two-way mirror and hidden microphones. This would seem to imply that not the least threat of a polygraph test to government employees, especially in "Miscellaneous Morals" cases, is the possibility that the whole interview, including the intimate exploratory questioning before the actual test is made, may be tape-recorded and filed away as part of the subject's permanent file. As one former Foreign Service officer of senior rank has put it: "When recorded on a tape in concentrated form and subsequently transcribed, [these interrogations] are irresistible means of

blackmail for any disgruntled clerk, unscrupulous politician, or personal enemy; and since government files are notoriously insecure, the victim of the test may well find himself vulnerable for ever after, so long as he remains in service."

There are countermeasures the examiner can take against a subject who is deliberately trying to falsify a test, but new ways to beat the machine will probably arise (as they have in the past), and there will inevitably be a time lag between them and the countermeasures. A current study of the polygraph in security work by the Office of Naval Intelligence includes this italicized warning: "It is therefore possible that presently unknown evasive techniques may be developed. If so, it could have to be assumed that subversive individuals attempting to infiltrate the Government would be adequately briefed in their use." Although it describes the polygraph as "a valuable adjunct to investigative techniques," the report concludes:

However, an improper use of the instrument will produce security clearances which might in particular instances have the most far-reaching and dangerous results."

SUCH "improper use" has certainly been made of the instrument at the National Security Agency, and may still be going on. The aggressive, bullying tactics of the NSA examiners must have distorted many a polygraph record there. "The positive suggestions of guilt constituting part of a 'third degree' procedure," write Tahan and Reid, "may produce reactions during a subsequently administered lie-detector test of an innocent person which will simulate true deception criteria . . . Moreover, the pre-test experience may so condemn a guilty subject that his enmity toward the investigators, rather than the offense itself, becomes the center of his thinking. The ordeal may actually relieve him of what his internal conflicts are present because of his criminal act [so that] the deception may not be detected. . . ." This statement is interesting in view of the fact that top-secret clearances were given at NSA, in the case of Jane Doe, solely on the basis of the lie detector examination.

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conducted under satisfactory technical conditions and by a well-qualified examiner, as in the case of Mr. Tweed of the State Department, the mere fact of its being given is destructive to morale. There must be a maximum of mutual confidence if any group is to function well, but how can morale be maintained when high officials are strapped to a whirling gadget and asked intimate questions about their private lives?



Decent human relations simply cannot exist in an atmosphere in which everyone is presumed to be lying—for, protest as the polygraphers do, asking someone to take a test amounts to saying, "You claim you're not a liar—well, we'll see!"

Writing in the *Washington Post* of September 21, 1952, Jerry Klatz wryly noted: "The lie-detector operators in Government know more about the sex lives of more persons, with the possible exception of Dr. Kinsey, than anybody. In fact, questions on one's sex life seem to be their favorites."

An American Specialty

A few months ago, the West German High Federal Court ruled that lie detector findings were not proper evidence in court. The reason given was not that such evidence is scientifically unacceptable but that the test was a violation of basic human rights. Specifically, it was a violation of the first article of the Bonn Constitution: "The dignity of man is inviolable. It is the duty of all state organs to respect and protect it." The judges held that the lie detector reduced the defendant to the level of an "object" and so deprived him of the right to be a fully active "participant" in his trial.

Whether this is a fair indictment or not (and it should be noted that in American trials it is often the defendant who funds the poly-

graph that the instrument has cleared the innocent as well as trapped the guilty—it is a typical European reaction. After listing the scientific objections to the lie detectors, Dr. Pierre Schneider, director of the psychiatric clinic of Lausanne University, concludes: "But the inaccuracy of this method is not the main reason for neglecting it. In our conception of the freedom of man and of his free determination, we think that every subject has the right to tell a lie if he chooses this method of defense. No medical or psychological method can be used against him . . . the authorities ought to prove by their methods, which should respect the free will of the subject, falsity or truth."

Although much of the early experimental work that led to the polygraph was done abroad, the instrument has seldom or never been used by British or Continental police—and certainly not by governments. "The instrumental detection of deception remains a typically if not exclusively American practice," Paul V. Trevillo writes in the February, 1953, *Tennessee Law Review*. "Its use abroad today is, so far as I know, limited to the large-scale use in investigative and counter-espionage work by our Armed Services."

There will shortly be one exception, however: The Reid agency in Chicago is training two Israeli physicians who were sent over by their government to learn polygraphic technique. And there already may be another nation using lie detectors. According to Colonel Ralph W. Pierce, who first brought the lie detector into important government use, "No other country to my knowledge uses lie detector equipment unless the Russians are using those five machines we had in China when China was taken over by the Communists. I have often wondered what they are doing with them."

PRaising the polygraph, an old-time police sergeant recently said: "I used to take the boys into the back room and use my club. The lie detector is better. It's a lot easier, and it don't leave marks." Except on the spirits of a good many government employees, and except on the fabric of American democracy.

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back; they also uncovered a good deal of less sinister "diversion" of tools, work clothing, and even Kleenex (it was during the paper shortage). Some intangible gains were also to be made, such as: "Revelation of verbally unrevealed situations in the personal life of the personnel that could result in the disclosure of classified information under peculiar circumstances."

The authorities decided to go ahead with the program and a contract was duly signed, though not with Mr. Keeler but with the enterprising Mr. Chatham. When the Atomic Energy Commission took over Oak Ridge from the Army in 1947, it also took over the contract and, the following year, extended its scope to include eighteen thousand Oak Ridge employees.

Six full-time examiners were now working all year round for Russell Chatham, Inc., at Oak Ridge, asking the employees if they had been associated with subversives or talking about their work with outsiders, if they had filled out their security questionnaires truthfully, if they had any plans for sabotage, and if they intended to violate the security regulations. (One or two subjects proudly answered "Yes" to the last question, under the impression that "violate" meant "uphold.") A few employees in very sensitive jobs were required to take the test every three months as a condition of employment. The others were merely invited to take annual or semiannual tests "voluntarily." The quotation marks may be explained by the experience of one of the recalcitrants. "We were very promptly informed," he has reported, "that we would be regarded with suspicion, would not be allowed to handle classified work, and would be interviewed by our Security Department and reinvestigated by the FBI. I regret to say that my co-workers capitulated. I didn't and was given a pretty bad time for a while. Had not my immediate supervisors had confidence in me and respected my work, I feel sure I would already have been discharged."

It is impossible to say how common such resentment to the tests was at Oak Ridge. During the earlier limited program, one Oak Ridge official stated that resentment against the tests "was never a serious prob-

lem" and that "in fact, many workers have expressed pride in being on the 'polygraph list' because this is concrete recognition of the importance of their work." Supporting this sunny view was a statement made in 1951 by Morse Salisbury, Information Director of the AEC: "I think they love it there because it keeps security uppermost in a man's mind." Later on, when he was asked why the program had not been ex-



tended to other atomic plants, Mr. Salisbury reversed his field: "To introduce it now in a new place might create an uproar and might break morale."

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EARLY IN 1951, the AEC began a study of the Oak Ridge program to determine its effectiveness and perhaps with the idea of extending it to other atomic plants if the findings were favorable. They were not. On April 2, 1953, the AEC announced "a new and restricted policy": The lie detector would no longer be used for mass screening but only "in specific cases of security interest at any AEC installation but on a voluntary basis and upon specific authorization, case by case, by the General Manager." When asked whether any such cases have in fact arisen since April, 1953, the Information Director replied, "... no instances have come to my attention," an answer that would be more enlightening were the italics not his. The announcement of the "new and restricted policy" went on to say that, after studying "the use of the polygraph at Oak Ridge and in other Federal Agencies [my emphasis this time], the AEC has concluded that the machine's techniques offer only indeterminate marginal increase in security beyond that afforded by established . . .

security measures. . . . [and that] the substantial cost of the Oak Ridge polygraph program in dollars, plus the intangible cost in employee morale, personnel recruitment and labor relations which might accrue from use of the machine substantially outweighed the limited advantage of polygraph use. The study showed there is little data available indicating that the polygraph has any value in detection of intent to commit sabotage or espionage, or sympathy with subversive movements or ideologies. Its . . . value was found to be in detection of pilferage."

The boom at Oak Ridge was by far the biggest thing that ever happened in the polygraph world. According to Chatham, during the seven years the program lasted, some fifty thousand tests were made of eighteen thousand individuals at a cost of \$361,000. Stating he had been "personally and professionally damaged" by the AEC press release, Mr. Chatham issued a lengthy rebuttal, alleging that "loose talk" had decreased by seventy per cent under the program and that ten per cent of those asked about their questionnaires had admitted false answers.

Since the AEC has neither answered Mr. Chatham nor published the actual survey, one can only speculate. There are the usual number of "inside" stories floating around: that Mr. Chatham was the victim of a personal vendetta, that the program was too expensive (although he has pointed out that its cost averaged \$50,000 a year as against a total of \$1.5 million spent annually on security at Oak Ridge), and that the testing methods were unsound. "I have heard that these men examine employees at the rate of two to four an hour," a widely respected polygraphist wrote while the program was still going on. "It is my opinion that a thoroughgoing examination of one subject cannot be made in less than forty-five minutes to one hour. Conducting a polygraphic examination in fifteen or twenty minutes is comparable to making a complete physical examination in the same time."

"Repugnant, Abhorrent . . ."

While the Atomic Energy Commission was debating the value of the lie detector behind closed doors, the